

**WRITING A THESIS IN A PANDEMIC: THE CASE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION****Ahmet Serhat UÇAR<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

It is thought that examining the effects of the Covid-19 period from the perspective of academics is important to be more prepared for possible similar situations. In this study, it was aimed to determine the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the thesis writing processes of academicians working in the field of special education. The research was conducted with a phenomenological approach from qualitative research methods. Purposive sampling was used to determine the participants in the study. The participants of the study were 11 research assistants who completed their doctoral studies in the Department of Special Education. Research data were collected through semi-structured interviews and researcher's diary. The data obtained were analyzed using content analysis, and eight themes were reached. The themes are; I should continue with this topic, I insisted on my method, I had difficulty finding participants, how was my data collection process affected, how was my reporting phase, what did my advisor do, how did other factors affect my research, and if the pandemic happens again. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions in academic studies as in every field. Academics tried to eliminate the problems they experienced with distance education platforms and individual solutions and to complete the process with minimal disruption. It is recommended that studies be conducted to identify, implement, and disseminate methods that can be used to overcome similar processes more easily in future research.

**Keywords:** Covid-19; Pandemic; academician; thesis writing; special education.

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# PANDEMİDE TEZ YAZMAK: ÖZEL EĞİTİM ÖRNEĞİ

## ÖZET

Covid-19 döneminin etkilerinin akademisyenlerin bakış açısıyla incelenmesinin olası benzer durumlara daha hazırlıklı olmak için önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu çalışmada özel eğitim alanında görev yapan akademisyenlerin tez yazma süreçlerinde Covid-19 pandemisinin etkilerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenolojik yaklaşımla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada katılımcıların belirlenmesi aşamasında amaçlı örneklem kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın katılımcıları Özel Eğitim Bölümünde doktora eğitimlerini tamamlayan 11 araştırma görevlisidir. Araştırma verileri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve araştırmacı günlüğüyle toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler içerik analizi kullanılarak analiz edilmiş ve sekiz temaya ulaşılmıştır. Temalar; bu konuyla devam etmeliyim, yöntemimde ısrarcı oldum, katılımcı bulmakta zorlandım, veri toplama sürecim nasıl etkilendi?, raporlama aşamam nasıl geçti?, danışmanım neler yaptı?, diğer etmenler araştırmamı nasıl etkiledi? ve bir daha pandemi yaşanırsa başlıklarından oluşmaktadır. Covid-19 pandemisi her alanda olduğu gibi akademik çalışmalarda da önemli aksamalara yol açmıştır. Akademisyenler yaşadıkları sorunları uzaktan eğitim platformları ve bireysel çözüm yolları ile ortadan kaldırmaya, süreci en az aksama ile tamamlamaya çalışmıştır. İleri araştırmalarda benzer süreçlerin daha kolay üstesinden gelinebilmesi amacıyla kullanılacak yöntemlerin belirlenmesi, uygulanması ve yaygınlaştırılmasına yönelik çalışmaların yapılması önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Covid-19; pandemi; akademisyen; tez yazma; özel eğitim.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The virus causing severe acute respiratory syndrome that emerged in Wuhan, China was named Corona (Xu et al., 2020). The situation, which started in late 2019 and turned into a global health crisis affecting the whole world, was declared as COVID-19 Pandemic (WHO, 2020). On March 11, 2020, it was announced that the first COVID-19 case was detected in Turkey (Ministry of Health, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant social, economic and psychological impacts. As in all areas, the pandemic affected the education process. With this impact, it is seen that many studies on the pandemic were carried out in the literature in a short time. Among national and international studies, the most frequently mentioned topic is the impact of the pandemic on education (Balıcı, 2020; Can, 2020; Çiçek et al., 2020; Daniel, 2020; Hoofman & Second, 2021; Grek & Landri, 2020; Parkar, 2020; Schleicher, 2020). Another intensively studied topic is the problems experienced in distance education (Al Lily et al., 2020; Bergdahl & Nouri, 2021; Kavuk & Demirtaş, 2021; Khan, 2021; Rashid, 2021; Sari & Nayır, 2020).

In terms of participants, classroom teachers (de Oliveira Dias, 2020; Kurt et al., 2021; Rasmitadila, 2020; Saygı, 2021; Yolcu, 2020), preschool teachers (Hong et al., 2021; Steigleder 2023; Yıldırım, 2021), science teachers (Bakırcı et al., 2021; Verma et al., 2020), mathematics teachers (Baki & Çelik, 2021; Drijvers et al., 2021; İskenderoğlu-Aydoğdu & Konyalıhatipoğlu, 2021), special education teachers (Akbayrak et al., 2021; Lesh, 2020). In addition to teachers, there are also studies involving families (Bozkuş-Genç & Sani-Bozkurt, 2022; Dong et al., 2020; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021)

and undergraduate students (Arı & Kanat, 2020; Copeland et al., 2021; Duban & Şen, 2020; Maqableh et al., 2021) as participants.

Studies focusing on academia and academics can also be added to the studies given as examples in terms of subject and participants (Demirdağ & Altun, 2022; Gabster et al., 2020; Sani-Bozkurt et al., 2022; Strielkowski, 2020). All these studies include descriptions of the pandemic period, the difficulties experienced, the measures taken and solutions to the problems. However, it is understood that research assistants are rarely included among the working groups. As many stages of education were affected during the pandemic, doctoral thesis processes were also affected. There is no research on this issue. Therefore, within the scope of the research, it is aimed to determine the opinions of research assistants who had to write a doctoral thesis during the pandemic process. For this purpose, from the perspective of the participants, the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic will be examined in all thesis processes from topic determination to reporting. In line with this purpose, the following questions were sought to be answered:

1. How did the pandemic affect the researchers' thesis topics, methods, findings and results?
2. What were the problems arising from the stakeholders in the thesis process (participants, supervisors, team members)?
3. How were the problems arising from the pandemic solved?
4. What are the participants' suggestions for researchers working in the field of special education in case of similar pandemics?

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1. Research Model**

It was conducted with a phenomenological approach, one of the qualitative research methods. Van Manen (2007) states that the main perspective of phenomenology is to understand human experiences. This study was designed as phenomenology (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018; Wilson, 2015) in order to determine the opinions, perceptions, experiences and suggestions of research assistants who completed their doctoral dissertations during the pandemic process that suddenly emerged.

### **2.2. Participants**

Eleven research assistants who completed their doctoral studies at Anadolu University Special Education Department were selected through purposive sampling. Among purposive sampling types, convenience sampling (Patton, 1987) was preferred. Details about the participants and semi-structured interviews are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Participant Characteristics and Semi-Structured Interview Information

	Branch	Age	Gender	Thesis Start	Thesis End	Method	Time	Date	Interview Location
Rıza	Hearing	35	Male	2019 May	2022 May	Mix	10:50	17.02.2022	Researcher office
Fahri	Intellectual	30	Male	2017 March	2021 June	Quantitative	24:13	17.02.2022	Researcher office
Timur	Hearing	33	Male	2019 September	2021 December	Quantitative	16:50	17.02.2022	Researcher office
Eda	Hearing	31	Female	2018 September	2022 May	Quantitative	19:21	18.02.2022	Researcher office
Tarik	Hearing	33	Male	2019 Şubat	2022 May	Quantitative	19:18	18.02.2022	Researcher office
Esma	Hearing	32	Female	2019 July	2022 May	Action research	27:14	21.02.2022	Researcher office
Sara	Autism	36	Female	2018 January	2022 January	Single-subject	23:08	28.02.2022	Researcher office
Ekrem	Autism	33	Male	2019 May	2021 June	Single-subject	15:29	01.03.2022	Zoom
Gaye	Special Talent	37	Female	2018 January	2021 December	Quantitative	28:02	02.03.2022	Researcher office
Serdar	Intellectual	33	Male	2018 February	2021 December	Qualitative	31:20	04.03.2022	Researcher office
Yavuz	Hearing	33	Male	2018 May	2022 March	Action research	36:54	07.03.2022	Researcher office

It was ensured that there was at least one participant who had completed their doctoral studies in the postgraduate programs of Anadolu University Department of Special Education in the fields of education of the mentally disabled, education of the hearing impaired, education of autism spectrum disorder and education of the gifted. The age range of the participants varied between 30 and 36. Four of the participants were female and seven were male. As can be seen, the participants started their dissertations before the pandemic and completed them while the pandemic continued. Two of the completed doctoral dissertations were action research, three were qualitative, three were quantitative, two were single-subject, and one was a mixed method research. The shortest semi-structured interviews conducted within the scope of the research lasted ten minutes and 50 seconds, and the longest interview lasted 36 minutes and 54 seconds. All interviews were completed between 17.02.2022 and 07.03.2022. Interviews were generally conducted at the participant or researcher's office. Due to the change of duty station of one participant, the interview was conducted remotely through the Zoom program.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

Semi-structured interviews were used as data collection technique in the study. Semi-structured interviews are among the most frequently used data collection techniques in qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2016; McMillan, 2004). The interview questions consisted of eight main and nine sub-questions. In addition, a reflective researcher diary was kept for data diversity. The diary is a

notebook in which the researcher records his/her thoughts about the data collection process, participants, experiences and the process (Glesne, 2014). The diaries were written in 12 font size, 1 line spacing, 12 pages and 33 pieces.

## **2.4. Data Analysis**

The data were transformed into findings through content analysis. Content analysis consists of the steps of thematizing the raw data, associating the connections between themes, and interpreting and reporting these relationships (Patton, 2002; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The semi-structured interviews were transcribed before the analysis. The transcripts were first coded using the Nvivo 11 program and then themes were created. In the coding process, 14 themes were reached and seven themes were reached in the thematization phase. While the themes were transformed into findings, connections were established between the data and interpreted and reported by the researchers. On the other hand, the unrecorded data in the reflective researcher diary were used to support the themes.

## **2.5. Validity and Reliability**

The validity and reliability of qualitative research is related to being credible, logical and defensible (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). With this point of view, at the beginning of the study, three academicians who have studies with qualitative research methods and who have a doctorate degree in special education were consulted during the preparation of semi-structured interview questions. After the feedback, a pilot interview was conducted with the revised questions and the final version was given. All of the interviews were recorded in audio or video format. No changes were made while transcribing these recordings. A special education specialist was involved in the process other than the researchers at the coding and thematization stage of the raw data obtained from the transcripts. The researchers thematized the codes simultaneously and independently with the expert, a consensus was reached, and then the reporting process began. Code names were used for all participants in the reporting process.

## **3. FINDINGS**

The findings obtained after the analysis were grouped under eight themes. The themes are; I should continue with this topic, I insisted on my method, I had difficulty finding participants, how was my data collection process affected, how was my reporting phase, what did my advisor do, how did other factors affect my research, and if the pandemic happens again.

### **3.1. Should I Continue with This Topic?**

The first theme of the research is the effect of the pandemic on the subject and method planned to be studied within the scope of the thesis. All of the participants stated that there was no change in the thesis topic with the pandemic announcement. Timur's 'The topic did not change', Eda's 'The topic did

not change. It was already a continuation of the master's thesis.' statements can be cited as examples. However, it is seen that even though the topic of study did not change, the researchers had great difficulty from time to time. Especially in subjects that require application in the field, it is seen that there is great panic and dilemmas. As a matter of fact, Sara's statement 'It was a subject that would affect the location a lot. It was dental health. With the pandemic, my field of study, the equipment I used, everything changed. The subject did not change, but I can say that adaptations were made.'" The difficulties experienced in order not to change the subject are understood from her statements.

### **3.2. I Insisted on My Method**

All but one of the participants completed their thesis with the research method they designed. However, it is understood that there were difficulties in not changing the method due to reasons such as not reaching the expected level of participants, school closures, and avoiding contact. Gaye stated, 'My method did not change, but we had a lot of difficulties. My application was an application that required direct contact with a tablet and the question of how to do it occupied our agenda for a long time. Methodologically, it is understood that the planned process worked for most of the participants, while a few participants had to make changes in the research design. Timur's statement 'Methodologically, it was planned to be a case study, but it evolved into phenomenology' and Eda's statement 'Since the number of participants decreased, we switched from predictivism to collinearity' can be shown as examples of design changes. Serdar, who had to change the methodology due to the pandemic, said, 'We designed it as action research and we were conducting it as such. But when the implementation phase came, everything changed. When the schools closed, we realized that we could not cope with the pandemic. We returned to qualitative, that is, case study'.

### **3.3. I Had Difficulty Finding Participant**

The most challenging aspect of conducting research during the pandemic was to find participants with the consensus of all participants or to ensure continuity with existing participants. Many participants withdrew from the studies due to fear of the disease, and even if they did not withdraw, there were problems in continuing. On the other hand, with the closure of the schools, researchers practicing in primary schools and smaller classes had to stop the thesis process for a while or change the participant group. As a matter of fact, Sara's statement 'Families did not want to participate, I was very tired' is one of the clear examples. On the other hand, Rıza mentioned similar difficulties regarding the participants with the statements 'Schools were closed because I was working on inclusion, we could not reach the participants' and Fahri said 'We tried to collect face-to-face as the schools opened, we tried to collect face-to-face! The consequences of the pandemic, which were not included in the planning of the thesis, also led to additional measures. Some researchers had to change the participant groups. Eda's statement 'Our priority was children with cochlear implants. In cases where I was not able to take camera shots, the participants were replaced with those with similar

characteristics.' is an example of this situation. A similar example is given by Ekrem: 'The participants were planned to be appointed MoNE teachers. However, when the schools were closed, we turned to rehabilitation teachers.'

### **3.4. How was My Data Collection Process Affected?**

Necessary changes in the data collection process planned for the thesis with the pandemic process are also among the findings. In particular, it is understood that the disruptions in the data collection process caused methodological changes. Rıza summarizes the current situation with the statements 'The process prevented us from collecting data. On the other hand, Fahri stated, 'Our planning was in three phases. Everything was ready for school-wide support implementation. The pandemic affected data collection too much. For this reason, we were only able to realize the first phase.' Fahri conveyed the problems experienced in the data collection process. Timur, on the other hand, stated that he restarted the data collection process twice due to the pandemic: 'I completed my observations. I set up the camera for the first time. While waiting for the class to get used to it, the pandemic broke out and the school was closed. The thesis was suspended for 6 months. Then a new planning was made.' The impact of the pandemic on people caused the manipulation of the subjects studied. Some of the researchers stated that during data collection, they went beyond the designed purposes and the focus was constantly on the pandemic. As a matter of fact, Eda summarizes this situation as 'Teachers were completely focused on the pandemic and I had difficulty in attracting them to the subject'.

Although the general opinion about the data collection process was that the pandemic had a negative impact on the data collection process, some participants also stated that this process provided advantages to their studies. For example, Tarık stated, 'I switched from printed material to online material. My data collection process has both accelerated and expanded numerically. I received data from almost all provinces'. Similarly, Yavuz summarized the situation in a similar way: 'There was some data I collected face-to-face and then we switched to online. It was actually an advantage, it was like hybrid data. It became easier for me to record the lessons.

### **3.5. How was My Reporting Phase?**

Participants had three different views on the reporting stages of their theses. Some of the participants argued that the pandemic contributed positively to the thesis writing process. While some participants saw the relationship between the pandemic and reporting as neutral, the rest stated that there were also problems at this stage. Fahri, one of the researchers who turned the effects of the pandemic in his favor in the report writing process, said, "My workload decreased due to distance education. There were no tasks such as reading exam internship files. There were fewer people coming to the office. I concentrated and wrote. This was the biggest advantage of the pandemic. Similarly, Ekrem's statement 'Reporting was positive. I was able to allocate the time I allocated for individual training to the thesis.' His views are in parallel with the positive thoughts. Esma stated that the report

writing process became difficult due to the pandemic: 'In reporting, data accumulated as they were collected again due to the pandemic. The analysis and writing process turned into chaos. If I wrote everything, it would be 100 pages of findings. Tarık and Eda summarized that the pandemic did not have a positive or negative impact on the writing process as 'It did not affect reporting' and 'It did not affect reporting', respectively.

### **3.6. What Has My Counselor Done?**

The opinions and attitudes of thesis advisors after the pandemic declaration are also among the findings that affect the research conducted. Participants had various opinions about thesis advisors. In general, it is understood that advisors make efforts to make the process easy and the research feasible. For example, Ekrem explained the support provided by the advisor as follows: 'My advisor has always made my work easier. We maintained our ideal order by meeting at my house or his house when necessary'. However, contrasting findings regarding the counselors are also among the findings. As a matter of fact, Yavuz described the problem he had with his counselor as follows: 'There were times when we had difficulties. For example, I offered to change the method, there was a problem and he got very angry. It took time to solve it. A similar example of the problems experienced with the advisor was given by Rıza: 'Communication with the advisor broke down. We communicated by e-mail and phone. I explain myself more comfortably face to face and there were problems.' It is also among the findings that the consultants did not have a positive or negative impact on the process, and that the work was carried out in a similar way after the pandemic as before the pandemic. As an example of this situation, Gaye's views can be given as 'It was difficult in general, but in my study, they did not force me, they did not react.

### **3.7. How Did Other Factors Affect My Research?**

The pandemic had an impact on all steps of the doctoral thesis process, from topic identification to reporting. In addition, participants stated that some factors other than research steps also affected their theses due to the pandemic. These factors include illness, research permission, and thesis monitoring committee. The fact that the researchers, advisors or participants contracted covid during the process and had chronic diseases indirectly affected the theses. As an example of this situation, Tarık said, 'My advisor had a chronic illness and retired to his home. Communication became more difficult. On the other hand, the research permission requests required for data collection and implementation in schools remained unanswered or lost their validity due to the pandemic. As a matter of fact, Esma conveyed the negative reflection of the permission process on the thesis with the sentences 'I had to get permission from the National Education four times. I could not use the permissions I got because the school was closed. Another factor was the demands of the thesis monitoring committees. While some participants found the demands of the academics in the monitoring committee excessive, others stated that they tried to contribute to the completion of the thesis. As an example of the attitudes



of the thesis monitoring committee, which supported the researcher by taking into account the pandemic conditions, Eda's views can be given as 'We had no chance to collect data face-to-face, but I could not convince my advisor. With the support of the thesis monitoring committee, the work was made possible, he was convinced. As a contrasting finding, Esma's 'demands forced me. They made the family, teachers and students prepare a program. Yes, it is difficult for you, but the end of their sentences always ended with things that would force me.' statements are among the good examples.

### **3.8. If Pandemic Happens Again?**

Participants' suggestions for future studies in case of a recurrence of the Covid-19 Pandemic or its derivatives are also among the findings. Suggestions are generally related to the planning phase. The most frequently expressed suggestion is that the data collection process should include designs that can be carried out remotely. Tarık said, 'Online data collection should be done', Serdar said, 'They should be technological. They should focus on the fastest and most convenient data collection method' are among the good examples of remote data collection. On the other hand, there were suggestions that applications should also be carried out on online platforms. Ekrem's statement 'I can recommend applications to be made on digital platforms' and Yavuz's statement 'Mobile designs can be made. At least you won't be dependent on others.'" The opinions of Ekrem and Yavuz are about the preparation of applications with remote content. Finally, preparing alternative plans and taking precautions are among the suggestions emphasized for the quick resolution of future chaotic events. Sara expressed this point of view as follows: "There must be a plan b, alternative environments, participants, applications must be considered. We live in a difficult age now, planning should be done with a little paranoia at the beginning".

## **4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In the study, it was aimed to determine the opinions of research assistants who had to write a doctoral thesis during the pandemic process. The findings obtained for this purpose were discussed and interpreted within the framework of the literature. When the first finding of the study is examined, most of the participants stated that they did not change the topic planned to be studied within the scope of the thesis. When the researches are examined, it is seen that research assistants have difficulties in determining the thesis topic (Akbulut et al., 2013; Kalem & Akman, 2007; Karadağ et al., 2018). Despite the difficulties brought by the pandemic, it is thought to be a positive situation that researchers do not change their study subjects and seek ways to overcome the process.

Considering the second finding of the study, all but one of the participants stated that they completed their thesis with the research method they designed. However, it is understood from the statements of the participants that there were many difficulties in not changing the method due to reasons such as not reaching the expected level of participants, school closures, and avoiding contact.

These difficulties are seen as inevitable situations brought about by the pandemic process. In the other finding of the study, all research assistants stated that they had problems finding participants or maintaining continuity with existing participants. They stated that many participants withdrew from the study due to fear of the disease or that they had difficulty continuing even if they did not withdraw. Due to the closure of schools, research assistants had to stop the thesis process or change the participant group. The pandemic process is one of the important facts known to cause uncertainty in educational organizations and students (Demirdağ & Altun, 2022). In addition, one of the most important problems experienced by researchers who plan the thesis process is the prolongation of the time they foresee for implementation and analysis (Barutçu & Onaylı, 2016). It is clearly seen in the statements of the research assistants that the prevention of the progress of the thesis process and the anxiety they experience about the continuity of the participants, as well as the uncertainty of that process, create negative anxiety and sadness on them. It is thought that the effect of the thesis advisor is an undeniable fact in overcoming this process in an easy way. In this regard, advisors are expected to help and guide their students in overcoming the problems they experience (Akbulut et al., 2013).

When the findings of what happened during the pandemic process and the data collection process planned for the thesis were examined, it was seen that the research assistants made statements such as that they experienced methodological changes, prevented data collection, had to apply it twice, the thesis was suspended, it went beyond the designed purpose, and the focus of the teachers being constantly on the pandemic had a negative impact. It is stated in the literature that researchers experience similar difficulties (Rodrigues et al., 2020).

Considering the findings of the research assistants in the reporting stages of their theses, some of the participants stated that the pandemic contributed positively to the thesis writing process, some participants stated that there was no positive or negative problem between the pandemic and reporting, while some of the participants stated that they had problems during the reporting stage. It is seen that the participants who stated that they had a positive contribution stated that their workload decreased, they concentrated and used their time efficiently. In the researches conducted, it is seen that the Covid-19-based working from home model brings advantages such as the time spent on the road or in traffic, the utilization of dead time in the workplace and increased productivity. (Akca & Tepe-Küçüköğlu, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020). In addition, working from home is considered to be a good alternative for multitasking (Allen et al., 2013). On the other hand, online learning environments are considered to be an important opportunity to overcome this crisis experienced by academics and students (Sahu, 2020).

Considering the findings of the research on the thesis advisor, the participants generally stated that their thesis advisors made efforts to make the process easy and the research feasible, while some of them stated that they had problems and difficulties with communication, and some of them stated that they did not have a positive or negative effect. Nacaroğlu and Bektaş (2022), Boufeldja and Bouhania (2020) and Gill et al. (2012) concluded that the participants carried out the process effectively with the advisor during the thesis process and did not experience problems with communication. These

findings on communication with the advisor and carrying out the process together effectively support the findings of the study. Koşar (2021) concluded that there was little advisor support during the thesis process, while Rodrigues et al. (2020) and Barutçu and Onaylı (2016) found that they had problems with the advisor. Lack of advisor support causes the thesis period to be problematic for the researchers and causes many problems such as unhappy and anxious (Pyhältö et al., 2016). Andrew (2012) conducted a study with participants who wrote their theses away from their thesis advisors and found that while the participants stated that being away did not cause a big problem, they felt lonely. In contrast to these studies, McAlpineAmundsen and Jazvac-Martek (2010) also found that students received full support from their advisors and felt important and valuable. Thesis supervisors should provide support to facilitate active and student-centered learning of doctoral students and provide opportunities for them to develop their research skills (Styles & Radloff, 2001). Considering all these negative situations, it is thought that thesis supervisors should support researchers in ensuring their personal motivation and using the thesis process and time effectively.

The pandemic had an impact on all steps of the doctoral thesis process, from topic identification to reporting. In addition, participants stated that some factors other than research steps also affected their theses due to the pandemic. These factors include illness, research permission, and thesis monitoring committee. The theses were indirectly affected by the fact that the researchers, advisors or participants contracted Covid-19 and had chronic diseases during the process. This situation, which is a natural result of the process, resulted in the completion of the research beyond the planned period.

When the last finding of the research is analyzed, the participants made some suggestions for the recurrence of the Covid-19 Pandemic or its derivatives. Looking at these opinions, it was seen that the participants made suggestions for the planning phase, the data collection process to include designs that can be carried out remotely, and also for the applications to be carried out on online platforms. In the researches conducted, it is stated that practices and policies should be determined to ensure organizational sustainability even in times of crisis by taking lessons learned from the Covid-19 process (Akca & Tepe-Küçüköglü, 2020). It is also thought that academics, students and managers should learn from this critical situation and overcome these difficulties and turn this crisis into an opportunity (Sahu, 2020).

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

As a result, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions in academic studies as in every field. Academics tried to eliminate the problems they experienced with distance education platforms and individual solutions and to complete the process with minimal disruption. In further research, it may be recommended to identify, implement and disseminate methods that can be used to overcome similar processes more easily. The qualities that the methods and tools that can be used in extraordinary situations such as Covid-19 should have can be determined. Studies can be carried out to

eliminate the problems experienced on online platforms, which are frequently mentioned in existing research.

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# GENİŞLETİLMİŞ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

## PANDEMİDE TEZ YAZMAK: ÖZEL EĞİTİM ÖRNEĞİ

### GİRİŞ

COVID-19 pandemisinin önemli sosyal, ekonomik ve psikolojik etkileri olmuştur. Tüm alanlarda olduğu gibi eğitim süreci de salgından etkilenmiştir. Bu etkiyle birlikte kısa süre içerisinde literatürde pandemiye ilişkin birçok çalışmanın gerçekleştirildiği görülmektedir. Ulusal ve uluslararası çalışmalar arasında sıkça değinilen konu pandeminin eğitime etkisidir (Balcı, 2020; Can, 2020; Çiçek vd., 2020; Daniel, 2020; Grek ve Landri, 2020; Hoofman ve Second, 2021; Parkar, 2020; Schleicher, 2020). Yoğun şekilde çalışılan diğer konu ise uzaktan eğitimde yaşanan sorunlardır (Al Lily vd., 2020; Bergdahl ve Nouri, 2021; Kavuk ve Demirtaş, 2021; Khan, 2021; Rashid, 2021; Sari ve Nayır, 2020).

Çalışmalar salgın dönemine ilişkin betimlemeleri, yaşanan zorlukları, alınan önlemleri ve sorunlara ilişkin çözümlere değinmektedir. Ancak çalışma grupları arasında araştırma görevlilerinin nadiren yer aldığı anlaşılmaktadır. Salgın döneminde eğitimin birçok basamağı etkilendiği gibi doktora tez süreçleri de etkilenmiştir. Bu konuya ilişkin bir araştırmaya ise rastlanmamıştır. Dolayısıyla araştırma kapsamında pandemi sürecinde doktora tezi yazmak durumunda kalan araştırma görevlilerinin sürece ilişkilerinin görüşlerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır

### YÖNTEM

#### Araştırmanın Modeli

Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenolojik yaklaşımla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Van Manen (2007) fenomenolojinin temel bakış açısının insan deneyimlerini anlamak olduğunu aktarmaktadır. Bu çalışma aniden ortaya çıkan pandemi sürecinde doktora tezlerini tamamlayan araştırma görevlilerinin görüş, algı, deneyim ve önerilerini belirlemek amacıyla fenomenoloji (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2018; Wilson, 2015) olarak tasarlanmıştır.

#### Katılımcılar

Araştırmaya Anadolu Üniversitesi Özel Eğitim Bölümünde doktora eğitimlerini tamamlayan 11 araştırma görevlisi amaçlı örnekleme ile belirlenmiştir. Amaçlı örnekleme türlerinden kolay ulaşılabilir örnekleme (Patton, 1987) tercih edilmiştir. Katılımcıların yaş aralığı 30 ile 36 arasında değişmektedir. Katılımcıların dördü kadın, yedisi erkektir. Tüm görüşmeler 17.02.2022 ile 07.03.2022 tarihleri arasında tamamlanmıştır. Görüşmeler genel olarak katılımcı ya da araştırmacı ofisinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bir katılımcının görev yeri değişikliği nedeniyle görüşme Zoom programı aracılığıyla uzaktan yapılmıştır.

## **Veri Toplama Aracı**

Araştırmada veri toplama tekniği olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler kullanılmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler nitel araştırma yöntemlerinde en sık kullanılan veri toplama teknikleri arasında yer almaktadır (Creswell, 2016; McMillan, 2004). Görüşme soruları sekiz ana dokuz alt sorudan oluşmaktadır. Ek olarak veri çeşitliliği adına yansıtımlı araştırmacı günlüğü tutulmuştur. Günlük araştırmacının veri toplama sürecine, katılımcılara, yaşananlara ve sürece dair düşüncelerini kayıt altına aldığı defterdir (Glesne, 2014). Günlükler 12 punto, 1 satır aralığıyla bilgisayar ortamında, 12 sayfa ve 33 adet yazılmıştır.

## **Verilerin analizi**

Veriler içerik analizi yoluyla bulgu haline dönüştürülmüştür. İçerik analizi, ham verinin temalaştırılması, temalar arası bağlantıların ilişkilendirilmesi ve bu ilişkilerin yorumlanarak raporlanması basamaklarından oluşmaktadır (Patton, 2002; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin analizler öncesi dökümleri gerçekleştirilmiştir. Dökümler Nvivo 11 programı kullanılarak önce kodlaştırılmış ardından temalar oluşturulmuştur. Kodlaştırma sürecinde 14, temalaştırma aşamasında ise yedi temaya ulaşılmıştır.

## **BULGULAR**

Analizler sonrası elde edilen bulgular sekiz tema altında toplanmıştır. Temalar; bu konuyla devam etmeliyim, yöntemimde ısrarcı oldum, katılımcı bulmakta zorlandım, veri toplama sürecim nasıl etkilendi?, raporlama aşamam nasıl geçti?, danışmanım neler yaptı?, diğer etmenler araştırmamı nasıl etkiledi? ve bir daha pandemi yaşanır mı başlıklarından oluşmaktadır. Araştırmanın ilk teması tez kapsamında çalışılması planlanan konu ve yöntemine pandeminin etkisidir. Katılımcıların tamamı pandemi ilanı ile birlikte tez konusunda herhangi bir değişikliğe gidilmediğini belirtmişlerdir. Katılımcıların biri dışında tamamı tasarladıkları araştırma yöntemiyle tezlerini tamamlamışlardır. Ancak beklenen düzeyde katılımcıya ulaşamaması, okulların kapanması, temastan kaçınma gibi nedenlerle yöntem değişikliğine gitmemek için zorluk yaşandığı anlaşılmaktadır. Pandemi sürecinde araştırma yapmanın en zorlu yanı tüm katılımcıların görüş birliğiyle katılımcı bulmak ya da mevcut katılımcılarla devamlılık sağlamak olmuştur. Hastalık korkusuyla birçok katılımcı çalışmalardan çekilmiş, çekilmese de devam etmekte sorunlar yaşanmıştır. Öte yandan okulların kapanmasıyla birlikte ilkokul ve daha küçük sınıflarda uygulama yapan araştırmacılar bir süre tez sürecini durdurmak ya da katılımcı grubunu değiştirmek zorunda kalmışlardır. Pandemi süreciyle tez için planlanan veri toplama sürecinde yaşanan zaruri değişiklikler de bulgular arasında yer almaktadır. Özellikle veri toplama sürecinde yaşanan aksaklıkların yöntemsel değişikliklere neden olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Katılımcılar, tezlerinin raporlaştırma aşamalarına ilişkin üç farklı görüşe sahiptir. Katılımcıların bazıları pandeminin tez yazım sürecine olumlu katkısı olduğunu savunmaktadır. Bazı katılımcılar pandemi ve raporlaştırma ilişkisini nötr görürken kalanlar bu aşamada da sorunlar yaşandığını belirtmiştir. Pandemi ilanı sonrası

tez danışmanlarının görüş ve tutumlarını da gerçekleştirilen araştırmalara etki eden bulgular arasında yer almaktadır. Katılımcılar tez danışmanları hakkında çeşitli görüşlere sahiptir. Genel olarak danışmanların süreci kolay, araştırmaları yapılabilir kılmak adına çaba gösterdiği anlaşılmaktadır. Konu belirlemeden raporlamaya kadar doktora tez sürecinin tüm basamaklarına pandeminin etkisi olmuştur. Ek olarak katılımcılar araştırma basamakları dışında bazı etmenlerin de pandemi nedeniyle tezlerini etkilediğini ifade etmiştir. Bu etmenler arasında hastalık, araştırma izni, tez izleme komitesi yer almaktadır. Araştırmacıların, danışmanların ya da katılımcılar süreç içerisinde covide yakalanması, kronik hastalıkları olması tezleri dolaylı şekilde etkilemiştir. Katılımcıların Covid-19 Pandemisi ya da türevlerinin tekrarlanması durumunda, gelecekte yapılacak çalışmalara ilişkin önerileri de bulgular arasında yer almaktadır. Öneriler genellikle planlama aşamasına yöneliktir. En sık ifade edilen öneri veri toplama sürecinin uzaktan şekilde yürütülebilecek tasarımlar içermesidir.

## **TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ**

Araştırmada pandemi sürecinde doktora tezi yazmak durumunda kalan araştırma görevlilerinin sürece ilişkin görüşlerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaç kapsamında elde edilen bulgular alanyazın çerçevesinde tartışılmış ve yorumlanmıştır. Araştırmanın birinci bulgusu incelendiğinde katılımcıların çoğu tez kapsamında çalışılması planlanan konuyla ilgili değişikliğe gitmediklerini belirtmişlerdir. Yapılan araştırmalar incelendiğinde araştırma görevlilerinin tez konusunu belirleme konusunda zorluklar yaşadıkları görülmektedir (Akbulut vd., 2013; Kalem ve Akman, 2007; Karadağ vd., 2018). Pandeminin getirdikleri zorluklara karşın araştırmacıların çalışma konularını değiştirmeyip sürecin üstesinden gelmenin yollarını aramasının olumlu bir durum olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Okulların kapatılmasından dolayı uygulama yapan araştırma görevlilerinin tez sürecini durdurmak veya katılımcı grubunu değiştirmek zorunda kaldığı görüşleri dikkat çeken bulgulardandır. Pandeminin süreci; eğitim örgütlerinde ve öğrencilerde belirsizliğe neden olduğu bilinen önemli gerçeklerden bir tanesidir (Demirdağ ve Altun, 2022). Ayrıca tez sürecini planlayan araştırmacıların planlamada yaşadıkları en önemli aksaklıklardan bir diğeri de uygulama ve analizler için öngördükleri sürenin uzaması olarak belirtilmektedir (Barutçu ve Onaylı, 2016).

Pandemi süreciyle tez için planlanan veri toplama sürecinde yaşananların bulguları incelendiğinde araştırma görevlilerinin yöntemsel değişiklikler yaşadığını, veri toplamayı engellediğini, iki defa uygulamak zorunda kaldığını, tezin askıda kaldığını, tasarlanan amacın dışına çıktığını, öğretmenlerin odağının sürekli pandemi olmasının olumsuz etkilediği gibi ifadelerde buldukları görülmüştür. Alanyazında araştırmacıların benzer zorluklar yaşadığı dile getirilmektedir (Rodrigues vd., 2020).

Sonuç olarak Covid-19 pandemisi her alanda olduğu gibi akademik çalışmalarda da önemli aksamalara yol açmıştır. Akademisyenler yaşadıkları sorunları uzaktan eğitim platformları ve

bireysel çözüm yolları ile ortadan kaldırmaya, süreci en az aksama ile tamamlamaya çalışmıştır. İleri arařtırmalarda benzer süreçlerin daha kolay üstesinden gelenebilmesi amacıyla kullanılacak yöntemlerin belirlenmesi, uygulanması ve yaygınlaştırılmasına yönelik çalışmaların yapılması önerilebilir.